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Forage News

Keeping Forage-Livestock producers in Kentucky informed
Dr. S. Ray Smith and Krista Lea, MS.~ Editors

January 2019

Get NAFA's 2019 Alfalfa Variety Ratings

The National Alfalfa & Forage Alliance (NAFA) has released the 2019 edition of its popular *"Alfalfa Variety Ratings - Winter Survival, Fall Dormancy & Pest Resistant Ratings for Alfalfa Varieties"* - a useful tool for hay and dairy farmers, extension specialists, or anyone involved in the production of alfalfa.

NAFA's *Alfalfa Variety Ratings* is a publication unlike any other in providing an extensive listing of alfalfa varieties and their corresponding ratings for fall dormancy, winter survival, bacterial wilt, aphanomyces, leafhopper, and a host of other issues. This publication is available in the November issue of Hay & Forage Grower magazine or by visiting NAFA's website. ~ NAFA e-newsletter (11/30/2018).

Evaluation of the Efficacy of Various Herbicides for the Control of Broadleaf and Buckhorn Plantain in Alfalfa (abstract)

Broadleaf and buckhorn plantain (*Plantago major* and *P. lanceolata*, respectively) are perennial weeds that are notoriously difficult to control in alfalfa cropping systems. The use of commercially available herbicides labeled for the control of plantain weeds has proven ineffective in the field. Sharpen® (saflufenacil) herbicide has been recently registered for the control of broadleaf weeds in dormant alfalfa, though it has not been evaluated on plantain control in the past. Field and greenhouse experiments were conducted to determine the ability of Sharpen® to effectively control plantain with little damage to alfalfa yield. In the greenhouse, applications of Sharpen® alone

caused a greater amount of injury to both broadleaf and buckhorn plantain compared to the non-treated control. Additionally, applications of Sharpen® in combination with other herbicides (Pursuit® or Raptor®) caused the greatest amount of injury to both broadleaf and buckhorn plantain compared to all other commercially available herbicide treatments. In the field, alfalfa did not exhibit damage symptoms or have reduced yield when treated with Sharpen® compared to the non-treated control. This research indicates that applications of Sharpen® provided control throughout the duration of the study to both broadleaf and buckhorn plantain with few negative effects to alfalfa in the field. ~ Leslie Beck, Mark Marsalis, and Leonard Lauriault, New Mexico State U. Find more detail on this and other alfalfa related research on NAFA's website at <http://alfalfa.org/research.php>.

Save Hay by Reducing Feeding Waste

Much expense and many long hours go into harvesting and storing hay for winter feeding. So why waste it! Reducing hay feeding waste could be especially important in 2019 since quality hay supplies are limited.

Cattle can waste as much as 45 percent of their hay when it is fed in the open without restrictions. How can you reduce these losses to minimize costs and maintain an adequate hay supply?

Your first step should be to limit how much hay is available. Research shows that it takes 25% more hay when you feed cattle a four-day supply at once compared to feeding them every day. Daily feeding reduces the amount of hay refused, trampled, fouled, over-consumed, or used for bedding.

A second step is to restrict access to the hay by using hay racks, bale rings, electric fences, feed bunks, or anything else that will keep animals off the hay. Use racks or bale rings with solid barriers at the bottom to prevent livestock from pulling hay loose and then dragging it out to be stepped on.

If you do feed hay on the ground, either as loose hay, unrolled round bales, or as ground hay, it is especially important to follow these guidelines. Limit the hay fed to an amount animals will clean up in a single meal. Anything left over will be stepped on, fouled, or used for bedding instead of as feed. And if you can – use an electric wire or other barrier to restrict access to only one side.

With a little foresight and careful management, you can stretch your hay and your hay dollars further. ~ Tom Keene

Forage Timely Tips: January

- ✓ Continue strip-grazing of stockpiled tall fescue for maximum utilization.
- ✓ Remove animals from very wet pastures to limit pugging and soil compaction.
- ✓ Feed best hay to animals with highest nutritional needs.
- ✓ Supplement poor quality hay as indicated by forage testing.
- ✓ Feed hay in poor pastures to increase soil fertility and enhance organic matter.
- ✓ Consider "bale grazing" - set out hay when the ground is dry or frozen. Use temporary fencing to allocate bales as needed.
- ✓ Prepare for pasture renovation by purchasing improved varieties, inoculant, etc. and getting equipment ready.

Don't Miss "The Dollars and Sense of Grazing", Forages at KCA, January 18th in Owensboro

The Kentucky Cattlemen's Association annual conference will be held Jan. 17-18 at the Owensboro Convention Center. Friday includes the annual "Forages at KCA, 2:00-4:30 in the West Ballrooms A-C and will focus on the economics of grazing and grazing cover crops. Speakers include Dr. Ray Smith and Dr. Greg Halich from UK, Ed Ballard from Illinois, and John Genho from Virginia. You don't have to register for the conference to attend our section, but we suggest you support KCA by registering for the event.

Quote of the Month: Losses Abound With Hay On the Ground

Moisture is the enemy of hay, so anything a producer can do to reduce the amount of moisture reaching hay will likely reduce losses. Protecting bales from rain that can penetrate hay is obviously desirable (bale wrappers help in this regard). What is less obvious is that with most types of forage crops, the greatest losses to round bales stored outside result from moisture moving into the hay from the ground. Avoiding hay-soil contact is a highly desirable first step in reducing hay storage losses. For example, simply placing bales on old tires, pallets or a layer of coarse gravel will reduce loss. Forage-Livestock Quotes and Concepts, vol. 2 is available online at foragequotebook.com.

Taking Stock

Here are a few suggestions to start the move to healthier pastures.

- **Soil Test.** Forages are crops, and they need nutrients. Knowing soil fertility levels helps you target your fertilizer dollar to the most needed fields. Thankfully pasture fertility levels don't change as much as hay fields, since most are returned in the manure and urine.
- **Find ways to remove dense canopies of dead grass** such as close mowing or brief periods of mob grazing. This allows sunlight to reach the crowns of cool season grass and initiate new tillers (which emerge next spring).
- **Nitrogen** is an important tool to rejuvenate grass pasture. Consider applying nitrogen in the spring to a damaged pasture and harvest it as hay.
- **Upgrade your fencing and water plan** for better utilization in 2019. Having water points centrally located in a pasture so livestock are always within 600 to 800 feet of water will result in more uniform grazing. UK will be offering Fencing Schools and Grazing Schools this spring that focus on pasture layout.
- **Address the production slump** of mid and late summer that happens with cool season grasses. Consider summer annuals, a deep rooted legume like red clover or alfalfa and even native warm season grasses. All these options have payoffs that offset up front costs and management requirements.
- **Target some fields for complete renovation.** Reseed these fields to cool season grass in late summer. One or two burn down sprays with glyphosate will help insure successful re-establishment.

Happy Foraging. ~ Jimmy Henning, Farmer's Pride, Dec.

Featured Publication: Forage Variety Reports

All 12 Forage Variety Trial reports are now available online at the UK Forage Extension Website.



Winter Meeting Rundown

With so many winter meetings, we'd thought we'd break down the who, where, when for each meeting all in one spot:

- **AFGC Annual Conference** will be held in St. Louis Jan. 6-8th and focuses on "Forages Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow". This is the 75th anniversary of AFGC. Register at www.afgc.org.
- **Forages at KCA** will be at the Owensboro Convention Center on January 18th and will focus on "The Dollars and Sense of Grazing". See our full highlight on the previous page. Register at www.kyca.org.
- **Heart of America Grazing Conference** will be hosted by the Indiana Forage Council in Ferdinand, IN Jan. 22-23. This is a regional event, attracting speakers, producers and industry representatives from Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Kentucky and Missouri. Register at <https://indianaforage.org>.
- **Pastures Please!!** is an all equine program focused on pasture management for the coming season. This is a free event, located at the Mercer County Fairgrounds Jan. 28th. More information is available on the UK Forage website.
- **38th Kentucky Alfalfa and Stored Forage Conference** will be in Lexington on February 21 and will focus on the Practical Considerations for the Production of High Quality Hay and Baleage. This is a state wide event and registration is just \$25. Register online at forages.ca.uky.edu/events. More information is available on the UK Forage website.
- **Small Ruminant Grazing Conference** is all things goats, sheep, and other small ruminants. Join us for this day long program and optional FAMACHA training in Morehead, KY on Feb. 23. Register at <https://2019SmallRuminant.eventbrite.com>.
- **Novel Tall Fescue Renovation Workshop** is a day long training focused exclusively on understanding, establishing, and managing novel tall fescues in pastures. In partnership with the Alliance for Grassland Renewal, join us in Princeton, KY on March 20th and register online at <https://2019UKYNovelTallFescue.eventbrite.com>.

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